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Reagan Vows Effort For Improved Ties

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President Reagan responded yesterday to the death of Leonid I. Brezhnev by calling for improved relations with the Soviet Union but turned down a proposal by his foreign policy advisers that he take what one of them called "the dramatic step" of attending the funeral of the Soviet president.

Reagan, rejecting the recommendation of Secretary of State George P. Shultz, said that Vice President Bush would head the U.S. delegation to Moscow.

Shultz had proposed that Reagan take the precedent-setting step of attending the funeral himself in an effort to improve U.S.-Soviet relations during a time of transition. "Our two nations bear a tremendous responsibility for peace in a dangerous time—a responsibility that we don't take lightly," Reagan said in a statement opening his news conference last night.

However, he emphasized—as he has many times in the past—that he believes peace can be built only on a foundation of military strength.

After reconfirming his commitment to continued negotiations with the Soviets to reduce both nuclear and conventional forces, the president said: "But we shouldn't delude ourselves. Peace is a product of strength, not of weakness—of facing reality and not believing in false hopes."

When Reagan was asked whether he would take any initiatives to reduce tensions between East and West, he responded that "it takes two to tango" and that he had already taken the first steps. The only example that he gave was the lifting of the grain embargo early in his ad-

ministration. In deciding to send Bush to Brezhnev's funeral on Monday, administration officials disclosed, Reagan sided with top members of his White House staff against the recommendation of Shultz and other key foreign policy and national security advisers.

The Shultz recommendation was strongly opposed by White House chief of staff James A. Baker III and deputy chief of staff Michael K. Deaver, according to administration sources.

These sources said that national security adviser William P. Clark, who was described by others as a "broker" in the discussion, backed Shultz, as did Central Intelligence Agency Director William J. Casey. Those who advocated that Reagan travel to Moscow argued that it would signal his commitment to arms control and to improving strained U.S.-Soviet relations.

However, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger and U.N. Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, who have taken a hard line against the Soviets, were described as agreeing with the White House staff that Reagan should not go.

"It was a philosophic thing," said one administration official. "If there's progress made in Vienna and Geneva [in troop reduction and nuclear arms control negotiations], the president would like to visit the Soviet Union. But there's been no opening, no sign of restraint from the Russians."

Some sources said the trip also would have been grueling for the 71-year-old Reagan, who is to travel to Chicago on Saturday for a tribute to his late father-in-law, neurosurgeon Loyal Davis.

Reagan did not go into any of these reasons at his news conference. Instead, he cited scheduling conflicts, including forthcoming visits by heads of state, an apparent reference to upcoming meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

The president added that he thought it was possible to continue the "search for peace" without "my attendance at the services."

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